New Satellite Applications Centre of Excellence for the South West

26 February 2016 - The South West Catapult Centre of Excellence to help support business growth in the region

The South West Catapult Centre of Excellence, which is co-funded by the UK Space Agency, will use data obtained through satellites to generate global trade opportunities for the South West and support business growth in the region. It is being set up in response to the growing interest in how this information can help transform existing businesses and create new companies.

This data provides information about the world around us, topics such as climate and weather, the location of ships and aeroplanes and agriculture. The Catapult centre will build bridges between academics and businesses. Regular themed events and workshops will take place to which local regional businesses will be invited.

The centre will be led by the University of Exeter, with a hub in Goonhilly in Cornwall, and staff resources in Goonhilly, Exeter, Plymouth and Falmouth. The Met Office is one of a number of partners including Plymouth University, Falmouth University, Plymouth Marine Laboratory, Goonhilly Earth Station and Rothamsted Research, together with a number of commercial partners. Its market focus areas will include agritech, maritime and e-health, healthcare supported by electronic communications.

The centre will allow academics and public sector partners to work with industry, particularly small businesses, to ensure new products and services become commercially available.

Professor Mark Goodwin, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Innovation and External Engagement), said: "This new Catapult Centre will allow the University of Exeter to help support business and research innovation in the South West. We are committed to working locally, regionally and internationally, to help drive new developments and business growth in this exciting field.

Dr Vicky Pope, head of integration and growth at the Met Office said "Big Data and Data Analytics hold incredible potential for our region and this centre. This initiative is very timely for the Met Office with the government investment in our new supercomputer and future development on the Science Park, and will help build an internationally significant regional expertise."

Catapult centres are also being established in the South Coast and the Highlands and Islands. There are existing centres in the East Midlands, Central Scotland and North East England.

Stuart Martin, CEO of the Satellite Applications Catapult, said: "We've witnessed a significant upturn in regional engagement over the past two years through the initial three Centres. This has included activities linking up the science base, large industry and SMEs to help develop satellite-derived applications and solutions.

"The network's expansion to cover the southern region of the UK and the Highlands & Islands will hopefully result in generating further understanding and awareness of the opportunities that satellite data and technology can provide - especially among market sectors not currently engaging with them - and developing new commercial opportunities for the UK's Space sector."

Colin Baldwin, UK Space Gateway Programme Manager at the UK Space Agency said: "The UK Space Agency is delighted to support this initiative. The expanded network of Catapult Centres of Excellence demonstrates that applications of satellites provide business opportunities across the length and breadth of the United Kingdom."

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